

Chasing the Rain

by Taylor F Lockwood

Publisher: *The author*, 2007. 128 pages, hardback; over 500 full-colour photographs. ISBN 9780970944924. RRP approximately \$40.00

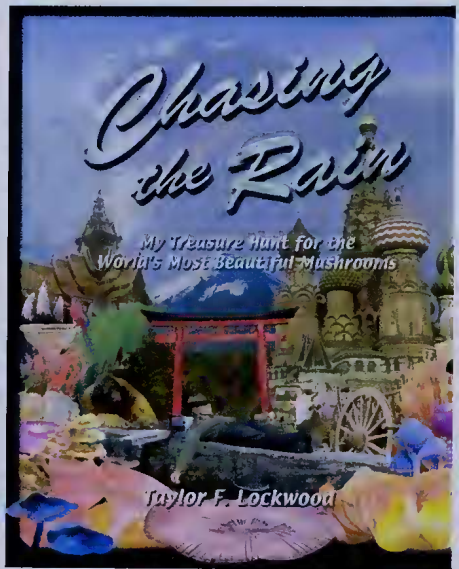
Subtitled *My Treasure Hunt for the World's Most Beautiful Mushrooms*, *Chasing the Rain* is an attractive coffee-table book that tells the story behind Taylor Lockwood's travels to 19 countries around the world in search of exotic and beautiful fungi.

Those familiar with Lockwood's previous book, *Treasures from the Kingdom of Fungi* (2001), will know of his passion for sharing the beauty of fungi through photography. *Treasures* had 274 stunning fungi photos. This new book provides even more delightful photographs and adds the stories behind the pictures.

The chapters are laid out in chronological order, and it is fascinating to see Lockwood's photographic style evolving over the years. The dramatic, tightly cropped images of colourful and glossy fungi gradually give way to more subtle images that capture or reflect more of the feel of the locale and surrounding vegetation. The composition becomes more relaxed with greater exploration of background colours and textures.

And while the fungi images are rightfully in the majority, there are many photos of the countryside and the people that Lockwood met along the way: pictures of smiling Tibetan children; steamy forest haze near Bangkok; a roadside mushroom shrine in Burma; Amazon River houses; billboards and streetscapes. These evoke a sense of place, and provide a background to his quests for the exotic and the beautiful.

The text is a journal of his travel experiences and records his motivations; the people, places, towns and countryside; the daily surprises and frustrations that are inherent in travel to foreign lands; and the small adventures and mishaps that befall him. Taylor offers many anecdotes such as his interactions with monkeys in Bali; traffic mishaps in India; Amazon River buses; near misses with snakes, and more.



All of which adds to the excitement of finding new and exotic species of fungi, such as the powdery white *Cystolepiota* sp., or the convoluted bright red stinkhorn *Kalchbrennera corallocephala* from South Africa. Lockwood is obviously driven by the excitement of these finds and the joy of sharing this beauty with like-minded enthusiasts.

The commentary occasionally lapses into the mundane and the whimsical. Did we really need two pages about flat tyres in Italy? (pp. 88-89). What do we make of '... as the rain made mushroom music on the roof' (p. 77)? This reader would have preferred tighter editing.

The book is not intended as a fungi reference or field guide (or even a travel guide). Rather, it is an indulgence in the sheer beauty and wonder of the world of fungi from a man who describes himself as an aesthetic mycologist. Nonetheless, Lockwood has drawn upon the skills of his many mycologist friends, and nearly all fungi images are helpfully identified to genus.

Chasing the Rain is a delightful book that will appeal to all fungi enthusiasts and will make a handsome companion to *Treasures* on any bookshelf.

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